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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/760,467	01/21/2004	Yoshinori Uchie	VX042584	1399

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EXAMINER

WALTERS, JOHN DANIEL

ART UNIT PAPER NUMBER

3618

DATE MAILED: 12/07/2005

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary	Application No. 10/760,467	Applicant(s) UCHIE ET AL.	
	Examiner John D. Walters	Art Unit 3618	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 13 October 2005.
- 2a) ☒ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☐ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-16 is/are pending in the application.
 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☒ Claim(s) 16 is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-5 and 8-15 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☒ Claim(s) 6 and 7 is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 13 October 2005 is/are: a) ☒ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
 Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
 Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
 a) ☒ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152) |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____ | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

DETAILED ACTION

Claims 1 – 16 have been examined.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

Claims 1 – 5 and 8–11 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Rigal et al. (6,076,848). Rigal et al. discloses a strap connection device for a boot comprising:

- a base plate (Fig. 1);
- a boot fixing band (Fig. 1, item 3) including a belt portion (Fig. 6, item 33) and a pad portion (Fig. 1, item 6), i.e. strap;
- a hardness adjusting plate, i.e. support element (Fig. 1, item 5);
- a buckle connected to the hardness adjusting plate (Fig. 1, item 8);
- a belt having one end mounted on the base plate and the other end engaged with the buckle (Fig. 1, item 31);
- wherein the hardness adjustment plate is removably mounted on the boot fixing pad (Fig. 3, items 5 and 6 & column 4, lines 35-41);

- wherein the hardness adjusting plate includes a cut-away groove (Fig. 3, items 50 and 51);
- wherein the belt portion is adjustable in length (Figs. 6 and 7);
- wherein the hardness adjustment plate is a band-shaped elastic plate, i.e. shaped like a link, strap, or tie (Fig. 3, item 5 & column 3, lines 20 and 21).

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 12 and 13 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Rigal et al. (6,076,848) in view of Andervon (2002/0101062). Rigal et al. does not go into detail on the composition of the hardness adjustment plate. Andervon, however, discloses:

- multiple shock absorbing pads (Figs. 4 and 5) where the inner and outer portions are composed of differing shaped combinations of materials to provide differing a hardness changes from interior of the binding to the exterior of the binding (page 2, paragraphs 55-57).

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of applicant's invention to take the teaching of multiple configurations of shock absorbing pads by

Andervon and apply it to the removable padded support element portion of the strap connection device of Rigal et al. to provide a removable strap/hardness adjustment plate with multiple stiffness configurations in order to provide differing manners of control of the board device upon which said boot connection device.

Claims 14 and 15 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Rigal et al. (6,076,848). Rigal et al. discloses a strap connection device for a boot as described above, also comprising:

- a screw and a nut wherein said screw penetrates said hardness adjusting plate (Figs. 6 and 7).

While it is not necessary for said screw to penetrate said pad portion, as said pad portion is secured to said hardness adjusting plate via press fit into front openings of said hardness adjusting plate, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of applicant's invention to require said screw to pass through said pad portion in order to add additional security to the attachment of said pad portion to said hardness adjusting plate.

Allowable Subject Matter

Claims 6 and 7 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. The binding strap including a removable

auxiliary elastic plate, in combination with the other elements recited is not found in the prior art of record.

Claim 16 is allowed.

Response to Arguments

Applicant's arguments, see drawing amendment, filed 10/13/2005, with respect to prior art label of figure 5 have been fully considered and are persuasive. The objection of 7/13/2005 has been withdrawn.

Applicant's arguments filed 10/13/2005 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive.

In regards to the rejection of claims 1 – 5 and 8 – 11 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b), Applicant states "the Official action stated that the hardness adjusting plate corresponds to support element 5...it appears that the Official action is attempting to equate the support element 5 of Rigal to both applicant's belt portion...and the hardness adjusting plate...". The previous action stated that Rigal comprised "a boot fixing band including a belt portion and a pad portion, i.e. strap (Fig. 1, item 3)". Reference numbers for said belt portion and said pad portion were omitted, as they were assumed easily discernable. Further clarification has been added to the current rejection. Figure 6 more clearly shows the interface between said belt portion and said hardness adjusting plate.

Additionally, Applicant states, "... claims 1 and 16 define that the hardness adjusting plate extends between an end of the boot fixing band and the other side of the base plate. The teachings of Rigal do not contemplate or suggest this structure". That specific language is not present within claims 1 or 16, nor is the meaning of said statement understood to be contrary to the structure shown and disclosed by Rigal.

For these reasons, the previous rejection stands.

In regards to the rejection of claim 9, Applicant states, "...the structures and arrangements for the hardness adjusting plate and the boot fixing band in current claim 9 cannot be contemplated or suggested by the single structure of the support element 5 proposed in Rigal". The previous and above rejections state that Rigal's structure equating to Applicant's boot fixing band is item 3 in figure 1, which is composed of a belt portion, a pad portion, and a hardness adjusting plate. Thus, both Applicant and Rigal show three component boot fixing bands.

Additionally, Applicant states, "...the teachings of Rigal do not contemplate or suggest this structure." The listed components and structure preceding this statement is not inconsistent with the structure shown and disclosed by Rigal and as described in the previous and above rejection.

For these reasons, the previous rejection stands.

In regards to new claims 14 and 15, see the above rejection.

In regards to amended claims 12 and 13, see the above rejection.

Conclusion

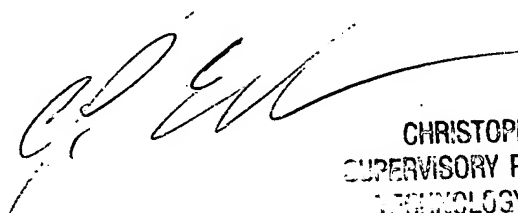
Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to John D. Walters whose telephone number is (571) 272-8269. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday - Friday, 8am - 5pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Christopher Ellis can be reached on (571) 272-6914. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

John D. Walters
Examiner
Art Unit 3618

JDW

CHRISTOPHER P. ELLIS
SUPERVISORY PATENT EXAMINER
TECHNOLOGY CENTER 3618